



## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 10-16, 2005

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Fredericksburg Comprehensive Plan

Community Workshops  
November 10 - 16, 2005

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## Introduction

As a part of Fredericksburg's Comprehensive Plan update process the City sponsored and held three community workshops in November of 2005. The purpose of these workshops was to provide Fredericksburg citizens an opportunity to participate in the development of the Comprehensive Plan early in the planning process. The three workshops were held in two different city locations. They were attended by approximately 95 citizens.

Attendees at each workshop were asked to participate in a SWOT Analysis and visioning/mapping exercise. In a small group setting, each was asked to share their individual ideas, on the Strengths, and Weaknesses of the City, as well as their perspectives on the Opportunities available to the City and the Threats that the City might face in achieving its desired future. The visioning/mapping exercise allowed participants to visually express their ideas on the city's key resources and special places, city locations in need of enhancement, and areas of the city that are suitable for new development or redevelopment.

Although held in two different parts of the City, there was commonality of opinion among participants on the issues facing the city. Similarly, there was a strong commonality of vision on a desired future.

### Common Themes

The following summarizes some of the common themes/ideas that emerged at each of the workshops:

City Strengths – small town feel, a strong sense of history, strong cultural resources, the Rappahannock River, Mary Washington University, strong tax base, downtown, public school system, proximity to DC, strong neighborhoods and sense of community, public transit system.

City Weaknesses – high cost of housing, lack of planned growth, traffic congestion, inappropriate infill housing, lack of sidewalks and pedestrian trails, zoning standards and lack of enforcement, need for more high paying jobs.

City Opportunities – enhancement of the river as a resource, develop more sidewalks and bike paths, enhanced promotion of our history, more emphasis on tourism, focus on key road improvements, promote downtown as an evening venue.

City Threats – excessive growth in surrounding counties, loss of small town character, poor zoning, rising housing prices, increased traffic and congestion, lack of funding to achieve goals, over emphasis on tourism.

Fredericksburg Comprehensive Plan  
Community Workshop #1  
November 10, 2005

Results of SWOT Exercise

**Strengths**

Good cultural institutions, museums, libraries, university.  
Public transportation – FRED.  
New schools.  
Diverse population.  
Credible city leadership.  
Tax revenue from Central Park.  
National historic assets.  
People working together.  
Good rail transportation.  
Historic preservation, buildings.  
Small compact size – location.  
Relatively safe- low crime.  
Great senior population.  
Creative talent – arts.  
Higher educational facilities – community college, Mary Washington.  
City public school system.  
Intact town center.  
New recreation facility.  
Excellent schools.  
Arts community.  
Strong sense of community.  
Historic resources.  
Financial stability.  
Mary Washington University.  
Tourism.  
Leadership  
Bus system (FRED).  
Proximity to DC and Richmond.  
Rappahannock River.  
Great diversity of people.  
Religious diversity.  
Hospital –good health care.  
Low crime rate.

Long-term planning.  
Central Park.  
Community Center – Bragg Hill FLC  
Historic legacy.  
Tourism.  
Small town/ friendly.  
Retail opportunities/restaurants.  
City of neighborhoods  
School system.  
Public transit system.  
Good tax base from commercial properties.  
City council.  
Community leadership.  
Community history.  
Sense of community- know your neighbor.  
Tourism  
College community

## Weaknesses

Abandoned cars in city.  
Abandoned properties.  
Tractor trailers parking on neighborhood streets – laws not enforced.  
Taxis not well maintained.  
Many areas not well served by good facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.  
Inconsistent enforcement of neighborhood zoning violations.  
Lack of affordable housing.  
Transit schedule - no weekend service; excessive waits.  
Aging population. Not enough young people.  
Limited rail service outside of commuter lines – no late runs/service.  
Lack of permanent high paying jobs.  
Parking in the city, e.g., churches.  
Downtown establishments close too early.  
Limited/fixed city boundaries.  
People not working together.  
Traffic congestion.  
Development in surrounding counties caused traffic congestion.  
Overcrowded conditions.  
Non-affordable housing.  
Rental /Home Ownership Ratios.  
Sub-standard transit system.  
Fixed borders – no where to grow.  
Aging infrastructure.  
Becoming a suburb of DC.

Inadequate housing and services for elderly and disabled.  
Over-reliance on big box development.  
Race relations and segregated neighborhoods.  
Non-pedestrian friendly neighborhoods.  
Infill can overwhelm nearby homes.  
Sprawl occurring in neighboring jurisdictions.  
Overbuilding on small lots.  
Not enough recreational opportunities.  
Insufficient ordinances to protect neighborhoods.  
Lack of affordable housing.  
Poor police presence in neighborhoods.  
Need to upgrade emergency services.  
Too lenient zoning ordinances and weak enforcement.  
Too many big houses being built out of scale with neighborhoods.  
Lack of planning.  
Overpriced housing – lack true affordable housing.  
Job opportunities with the city.  
Lack of communication with the city. Not just “it was in the paper”.  
Low rate of home ownership.

## Opportunities

Riverfront – more public access.  
City could capitalize on all of its cultural and historical assets.  
Learn from mistakes; opportunities for city and counties to work together.  
More viable tourist destination; multi-day visits.  
Opportunities to improve traffic flow/congestion.  
Refrain from “Fairfaxing” our city.  
Slavery Museum.  
Downtown parking deck.  
Developing our own creative talents.  
Attract hotel large enough for major conferences.  
New city park on Dixon Street.  
Swimming pool.  
Proximity to DC.  
Become a job center.  
Developing the river for tourism.  
Expanding our educational opportunities.  
Development of the Slavery Museum.  
Develop historic venues.  
Build a civic center.  
Develop pedestrian friendly communities.  
Maury School.  
Make ARB’s goals more image oriented.  
Promote religious freedom.

Sidewalks from Bragg Hill to Central Park.  
Expand transit system.  
City to take lead on regional issues.  
Celebrate Virginia.  
Convention center.  
Slavery museum.  
Later hours for downtown stores.  
Review ordinances – ensure they will enhance neighborhoods.  
Waterfront development – must be handled carefully.  
Better communications with citizens

## Threats

Building additions that are too big and out of scale with neighborhood character.  
Houses being built too close together - not enough yard space.  
Unwise use of Rappahannock River – water withdrawal, safety issues, loss of wetlands.  
Increasing traffic in city and surrounding area.  
Overheated housing market pricing out local residents.  
Zoning ordinance is inadequate. Current officials not willing/able to enforce provisions.  
Youth issues – not finishing school, leaving area.  
Losing good teachers because of low pay.  
Proposals to allow reductions in setbacks between houses.  
Too many zoning variances being issued.  
Vulnerable to negative impacts from City decisions.  
Becoming a bedroom community to DC and Richmond.  
Proximity to nuclear power plant.  
Pollution.  
Overcrowding.  
Gang activities.  
Increased drug activity  
Unsafe streets for children.  
Housing densities – too high.  
Accidents on I-95, Rt. 17, Rt. 3. – traffic backs up in the city.  
Not having long term vision.  
Big houses in modest neighborhoods.  
Excessive growth in the counties.  
Lack of impact fees – subsidizing sprawl.  
Government abuse of power.  
Degradation of Rappahannock River and Chesapeake Bay.  
Drug threats – gang activity.  
Air pollution.  
Unaffordable housing.  
Traffic gridlock.  
Lafayette Blvd.

Fredericksburg Comprehensive Plan  
Community Workshop #2  
November 15, 2005

Results of SWOT Exercise

## Strengths

History.  
Rappahannock River.  
Location between Richmond and Washington.  
Well maintained houses/neighborhoods.  
Mary Washington University.  
Hospital.  
Small town feel – wave to people you know; know business people.  
Walkable – but getting less so.  
FRED.  
Carl's.  
Education – new James Monroe High School.  
Historical Society.  
Tourism.  
Friends of the Rappahannock.  
Tax base.

## Weaknesses

Traffic on Fall Hill Ave. –Need traffic light at Hanson Ave.  
Some traffic solutions have cut off pathways for walking.  
Lost some neighborhood groceries.  
Visibility of scrap metal business and lumber yard on Blue Grey Parkway.  
River/shoreline could be better maintained.  
Some businesses at “gateways” do not make good first impressions.  
Enormous infill houses on small lots – not in character with neighborhoods.  
Takes too long for building permit approval.  
High speed traffic through city – ignores crosswalks. Lack of traffic enforcement.  
Some areas need sidewalks for pedestrian safety.



## Opportunities

More bike paths, walking paths.  
Create additional employment centers.  
Enhance education system.  
Preserve 20 acres on Fall Hill below Linden – now for sale. Conservation easement.  
A new road from Fall Hill Avenue to hospital.  
Opportunity to widen Fall Hill Avenue and connect to Mary Washington.  
Revitalization of downtown in evenings for families and tourism.

## Threats

Traffic.  
Lack of money to get it all done.  
Lack of affordable housing (for teachers etc.).  
Residents in region don't go downtown. Loss of some downtown stores to mall area.  
Lack of convenient parking downtown.  
Downtown shops not open at night. "Way-finding" issues.  
Treating downtown as a tourist destination - not for locals.

Fredericksburg Comprehensive Plan  
Community Workshop #3  
November 16, 2005

Results of SWOT Exercise

## Strengths

Downtown area.  
Central Park  
Close to I-95; Good access.  
“Small City”.  
We’re not too big – small town feel.  
Great example of Euclidian zoning.  
“Expanded Neighborhood” feel  
You run into people you now at stores.  
We are the core of the region.  
Good parks.  
Mary Washington University.  
City parks.  
Our cultural institutions.  
Libraries.  
Well established school system – kids know many of their peers.

## Weaknesses

Traffic Problems – pass-through v. internal.  
Preserve Fall Hill Ave - Do not widen to 4-6 lanes.  
Difficult to get out of neighborhoods along Fall Hill Ave.  
Need for sound barriers along I-95.  
Falmouth Bridge.  
Need to widen key roads and add sidewalks along these roads.  
Need to make entire city more walkable.  
Need to install crosswalk timers.  
Need to incorporate more parks into development proposals.  
Need to revitalize “ghost town shopping centers” – Food Lion, Hechinger’s.  
Need more supermarkets.  
Need to identify more future parks in the plan.  
Need additional ability for people to walk/bike to work.

## Opportunities

Promote walking and biking.

Preserve and enhance the river - environmental and cultural resource.

Enhanced marketing of our history.

## Threats

Lack of funding to accomplish goals.

We may not be a “hub” in the future.

We’ve become acclimated to one-third of revenues from commercial.

Tourism should not be viewed as a panacea.

“Complacency”.

Losing interest in attracting businesses (don’t over emphasize tourism).

Need to get/keep higher paying jobs.

## Appendix A

# Participant Vision Exercise Maps